



Mr. Ford's Page



IF YOU ask an employer what kind of a shop he has, he should be able to make the proud reply, "An American Shop." If you ask an employe in what kind of a shop he works, he too should be able to say, "An American Shop." There are all kinds of names for shops; there is the closed shop and the open shop—terms which are redolent of strife and exclusion; there is the piece-work shop and the straight wage shop; there is the shop that is booming along all the time because of the quality of its workmanship, management and output, and there is the shop which hobbles along like a cripple, hardly able to live; there is the shop where human principles rule, and the shop where men are treated as impersonally as if they were but raw material. But the main difference that exists between shops is just this: either they measure up to the American ideal, or they do not.

There are many employers who indulge in great talk these days about "100 per cent Americanism." It would be a good thing if they were required to accompany their boast by a statement of the profits they took from the government in the recent war. It would be found that the percentage of their profits was equal to or in excess of the percentage of purity they claim for their Americanism.

The flag that flies above the shop is not the only index of Americanism a shop can have; the policy that is practiced inside tells the story. We all reverence Our Flag as the symbol of a great free people, but we cannot reverence all the uses to which profiteers have put it.

America needs the American Shop. It needs it not only to meet the vast economic problems which confront us in the production of an adequate quantity of goods; but also to solve the problems which have grown out of past injustices on the part of both leadership and labor.

It is pretty well conceded, even by the most slow-minded employer, that the question of production cannot be settled until the question of the producer is settled. The principal and controlling factor in all our difficulties is the human element. Indeed, all our difficulties, of whatever nature, are human difficulties; they are the signs of humanity in trouble.

WHAT would be some of the characteristics of a true American Shop? In personnel and policy it would be representative. There is no room for national, racial or religious prejudices in an American Shop. Its purpose is industry, and that ought to open wide its doors to all the industrious. The need of men's labor, and the need of men themselves to labor, is universal. Work is the burden laid on us all and no man shirks it without doing harm to himself and the whole social body. No race is superior, no race is inferior, neither is any individual so superior or inferior as to escape the necessity of work. In the arctic and in the tropics, among civilized and barbarous peoples, the rule of "work to live" is operative, and men are found obeying it. There are no class distinctions in industry. The only nobleman an enlightened estimate can recognize is the citizen who is carrying his own end of the common burden and doing a little more in order that society may be carried along prosperously and harmoniously.

By being representative in policy is meant that the American Shop will be conducted with a view to all the rights and benefits of the men engaged there and that portion of the public which it serves. It is too sadly true that in the past most shops have been conducted with a view to the benefit of one individual, one family or one group of investors. But we have come upon a new vision in industry. We have caught sight of the power of industry to make men as well as the commodities of commerce. When we consider how much of our waking time is spent in working, it is a thousand pities if the time so spent does not contribute to the workman himself, in his moral, social and intellectual life, as well as to his physical needs. Work is sanative; it is educative; it is preservative. It produces results in the man himself as well as in the

material that passes under his hand. But, if it only saps the man, if it makes him less a man, if it withdraws him from a sense of belonging to and serving society, there is something wrong. An American Shop will protect the rights of all engaged in it. One of the greatest errors into which commercial greed and selfishness have led us is the acceptance of a policy that no rights are to be granted until it is absolutely impossible to withhold them any longer. This has led to a sense of industrial disturbance which has seriously affected the foundations on which we live at peace with one another. The American Shop will grant rights because they are Rights, in the sound faith that whatever is right is practicable, and if not practicable under the present system, then under a revised system which common sense and justice shall erect.

This simply means that the principles upon which we live together as a nation and out of which we have reared our great free institutions shall operate in industry also. It is the transcription of the Declaration and the Constitution into industrial terms. It is the act of making our political liberty complete by adding thereto economic liberty also.

Our nation has been slowly made, but it had a great advantage in starting right. Little by little it has modified its Constitution, not to change the spirit of it, but to enlarge its application and to render it more effective in achieving its original objects.

AND in this way our industrial relations must be remade. We have certain sound foundations now. We believe that labor is what all must engage in for self-development, for social service, and to promote the evolution of humanity. We have no fatuous idea that we shall ever be free of the necessity of work. Baked bread will never grow on trees, nor will Nature ever provide us with homes and schools ready built.

If practices and attitudes have crept in which are not in harmony with the truth that we are all human beings of equal needs, then these will have to be revised and corrected. All of us are fallible. The one and only superman has not come, but we are in a super-stage of society wherein the general level of power and vision is elevated to a degree that a previous age would have considered miraculous. Therefore we are better fitted to work out our problems by ourselves, in the American Way. And what is the

American Way? Why, by all of us starting out with the agreement that wisdom is not the exclusive possession of any man or party. All that we have in this country is the outcome of many points of view merged into a workable program. We have all shades of opinion in this country, each of them strongly endorsed and propagated. But the country itself merges all shades into one distinctive American whole.

The American Way is constructive. It grows out of ideas, not out of violence. It works by education, not by disintegration. Nothing permanent is accomplished by forces pulling apart, because in this country everything that is accomplished comes by various opinions pulling together toward a desired end.

There is no difference of opinion in this country as to what we desire our common life to be. All agree on the desired object. The difference comes in the methods of attaining it. But even this difference is educational. Radical and conservative interact upon each other, modify each other, until presently they come together for united achievement. That is the American Way, and the results of it stand.

The American Shop should reflect the Republic in its highest ideals. Liberty, unity and fraternity should be its bond and its method from the front office to the last man at the last machine at the end of the shop—and then out beyond to all the families which the shop serves, and to the public which is the beneficiary of its work and planning.

WE HAVE the American nation, the American flag, the American school, the American home—now we should get the American Shop. The American Shop would translate into industrial terms what our Declaration and Constitution translate into political terms. It would mean liberty, unity and fraternity in work. Until the work side of life is regulated by justice, made free in opportunity and made the servant of humanity in all its rights and aspects, our world is only half made. No one can escape work. No one is superior to work. But the function of work is to benefit all honest producers, not a shrewd and powerful few.